

## CLAIMS

1. A system for managing the copying of contents to external equipment, said system comprising:

a first reader operable to read in contents to be copied;

a second reader operable to read in identification information of said contents;

a database storing information regarding whether copying is permissible for each of said contents;

an electronic watermark inspecting unit operable to inspect electronic watermarks inserted into said contents and to produce inspection results; and

a controller operable to control copying of said contents to the external equipment;

wherein said controller searches said database based on at least one of said identification information and attribute information of said contents, and in the event that a matching record exists, controls copying according to the content of said matching record, and in the event that a matching record does not exist, controls copying according to said inspection results.

2. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said controller is operable to compress and encipher said contents and to then copy said contents to the external equipment.

3. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said controller and said database are connected to one another via a safe communication path.

4. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said attribute information is data comprising at least a part of said contents that has been clipped.

5. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said attribute information is a hash value for at least a part of said contents.

6. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said attribute information is selected from a characteristic value and a characteristic quantity relating to said contents.

7. A method for managing copying of contents to external equipment, comprising:

reading in contents to be copied;

reading in identification information of said contents;

maintaining a database of information regarding whether copying is permissible for each of said contents;

searching said database based on at least one of said identification information and attribute information of said contents; and

in the event that a matching record exists in said database, controlling copying according to the content of said matching record, and, in the event that a matching record does not exist in said database, inspecting said contents for an electronic watermark inserted therein to produce inspection results, and controlling copying according to said inspection results.

8. A method according to Claim 7, wherein said steps of controlling copying include compressing and enciphering said contents and then copying said contents to said external equipment.

9. A method according to Claim 7, wherein said database searching step is performed via a safe communication path.

10. A method according to Claim 7, wherein said attribute information is data comprising at least a part of said contents that has been clipped.

11. A method according to Claim 7, wherein said attribute information is a hash value for at least a part of said contents.

12. A method according to Claim 7, wherein said attribute information is selected from a characteristic value and a characteristic quantity relating to said contents.

13. An information processing device for executing copying of contents to external equipment, said device comprising:

a first reader operable to read in contents to be copied;

a second reader operable to read in identification information of said contents;

an electronic watermark inspecting unit operable to inspect electronic watermarks inserted into said contents and to produce inspection results; and

a controller operable to communicate with an external server and to control copying of said contents to the external equipment;

wherein said controller makes inquiry to the external server based on at least one of said identification information and attribute information of said contents, and, according to the inquiry results, either executes copying of said contents, or inspects said contents with said electronic watermark inspecting unit and controls copying according to said inspection results.

14. An information processing device according to Claim 13, wherein said controller is operable to compress and encipher said contents and to copy said contents to the external equipment.

15. An information processing device according to Claim 13, wherein the communication between the controller and the external server is made via a safe communication path.

16. An information processing device according to Claim 13, wherein said attribute information is data comprising at least a part of said contents that has been clipped.

17. An information processing device according to Claim 13, wherein said attribute information is a hash value for at least a part of said contents.

18. An information processing device according to Claim 13, wherein said attribute information is selected from a characteristic value and a characteristic quantity relating to said contents.

19. A method for executing copying of contents to external equipment, comprising:

reading in contents to be copied;

reading in identification information of said contents;

making inquiry to an external server based on at least one of said identification information and attribute information of said contents; and

according to the inquiry results, either copying said contents, or inspecting said contents for an electronic watermark inserted therein to produce inspection results, and controlling copying according to said inspection results.

20. An information processing method according to Claim 19, wherein said steps of controlling copying include compressing and enciphering said contents and then copying said contents to said external equipment.

21. An information processing method according to Claim 19, wherein said inquiry to said external server is made via a safe communication path.

22. An information processing method according to Claim 19, wherein said attribute information is data comprising at least a part of said contents that has been clipped.

23. An information processing method according to Claim 19, wherein said attribute information is a hash value for at least a part of said contents.

24. An information processing method according to Claim 19, wherein said attribute information is selected from a



searching said database based on at least one of said identification information and said attribute information; and

in the event that a matching record exists in said database, controlling copying according to the content of said matching record, and, in the event that a matching record does not exist in said database, inspecting said contents for an electronic watermark inserted therein to produce inspection results, and controlling copying according to said inspection results.

31. A recording medium according to Claim 30, wherein said attribute information is data comprising at least a part of said contents that has been clipped.

32. A recording medium according to Claim 30, wherein said attribute information is a hash value for at least a part of said contents.

33. A recording medium according to Claim 30, wherein said attribute information is selected from a characteristic value and a characteristic quantity relating to said contents.

34. A recording medium recorded with a computer readable program for executing copying of contents to external equipment, said program comprising:

reading in contents to be copied;

reading in identification information of said contents;

obtaining attribute information of said contents;

making inquiry to an external server based on at least one of said identification information and said attribute information of said contents; and

according to the inquiry results, either copying said contents, or inspecting said contents for an electronic watermark inserted therein to produce inspection results, and controlling copying according to said inspection results.

35. A recording medium according to Claim 34, wherein said attribute information is data comprising at least a part of said contents that has been clipped.

36. A recording medium according to Claim 34, wherein said attribute information is a hash value for at least a part of said contents.

37. A recording medium according to Claim 34, wherein said attribute information is selected from a characteristic value and a characteristic quantity relating to said contents.

38. A system for managing copying of contents to external equipment, said system comprising:

- a first reader operable to read in contents to be copied;

- a second reader operable to read in identification information of said contents;

- a database storing information regarding whether copying is permissible for each of said contents;

- an electronic watermark inspecting unit operable to inspect electronic watermarks inserted into said contents and to produce inspection results;

- an orthogonal conversion unit operable to perform orthogonal conversion of said contents to produce converted contents;

- an encoding compression unit operable to subject said converted contents to quantization and Huffman encoding to produce encoded and compressed contents;

- an enciphering unit operable to encipher said encoded and compressed contents to produce enciphered contents; and

- a controller operable to control copying of said enciphered contents to the external equipment;

wherein said controller searches said database based on at least one of said identification information and an orthogonal conversion value of said contents or a hash value

thereof, and, in the event that a matching record exists, controls copying of said enciphered contents according to the content of said matching record, and, in the event that a matching record does not exist, controls copying of said enciphered contents according to said inspection results.

39. A method for managing copying of contents to external equipment, said method comprising:

reading in contents to be copied;

reading in identification information of said contents;

performing orthogonal conversion of said contents to produce converted contents;

subjecting said converted contents to quantization and Huffman encoding to produce encoded and compressed contents;

enciphering said encoded and compressed contents to produced enciphered contents;

maintaining a database of information regarding whether copying is permissible for each of said contents;

searching said database based on at least one of said identification information and an orthogonal conversion value of said contents or a hash value thereof; and

in the event that a matching record exists in said database, controlling copying of said enciphered contents according to the content of said matching record, and, in the event that a matching record does not exist in said database, inspecting said contents for an electronic watermark inserted therein to produce inspection results, and controlling copying of said enciphered contents according to said inspection results.

40. An information processing device for executing copying of contents to external equipment, said device comprising:



a first reader operable to read in contents to be copied;

a second reader operable to read in identification information of said contents;

an electronic watermark inspecting unit operable to inspect electronic watermarks inserted into said contents and to produce inspection results;

an orthogonal conversion unit operable to perform orthogonal conversion of said contents to produce converted contents;

an encoding compression unit operable to subject said converted contents to quantization and Huffman encoding to produce encoded and compressed contents;

an enciphering unit operable to encipher said encoded and compressed contents to produce enciphered contents; and

a controller operable to control copying of said enciphered contents to the external equipment;

wherein said controller makes inquiry to an external server based on at least one of said identification information and an orthogonal conversion value of said contents or a hash value thereof, and, according to the inquiry results, either copies said enciphered contents, or controls copying of said enciphered contents according to said inspection results.

41. An information processing method for executing copying of contents to external equipment, said method comprising:

reading in contents to be copied;

reading in identification information of said contents;

performing orthogonal conversion of said contents to produce converted contents;

subjecting said converted contents to quantization and Huffman encoding to produce encoded and compressed contents;

enciphering said encoded and compressed contents to produce enciphered contents;

making inquiry to an external server based on at least one of said identification information and an orthogonal conversion value of said contents or a hash value thereof; and

according to said inquiry results, either copying said enciphered contents, or inspecting said contents for an electronic watermark inserted therein to produce inspection results, and controlling copying of said enciphered contents according to said inspection results.